

Message Text

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SUBJ: MALTA ENJOYS A QUIET POLITICAL WEEK, BUT MINTOFF
TAKES A SWIPE AT "THE AMERICANS"

REF: VALLETTA 0960

1. THE FIRST WEEK (AND SECOND WEEKEND) OF THE MALTESE
ELECTION CAMPAIGN PASSED RATHER QUIETLY, WITHOUT A RECURRENCE
OF THE OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE WHICH MARRED THE OPENING
ROUND A WEEK AGO. BOTH THE LABOR AND NATIONALIST PARTIES
HELD A NUMBER OF POLITICAL CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS DURING
THE WEEK AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT MALTA AND GOZO,
CULMINATING IN RIVAL "MASS" MEETINGS ON SATURDAY EVENING.
FORTUNATELY, THE TWO MASS GATHERINGS WERE FAR ENOUGH
APART TO KEEP THE AGITATORS WELL SEPARATED (THE
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LABORITES ASSEMBLED IN MINTOFF'S STRONGHOLD AT KALKARA,

WHILE THE NATIONALISTS WERE IN THE PRO-BORG OLIVIER AREA OF SLIEMA). BOTH MEETINGS WERE WELL ATTENDED, BUT ORDERLY, AND NEITHER PROVIDED ANY SIGNIFICANTLY NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CAMPAIGN.

2. IN HIS ADDRESS AT SLIEMA, NATIONALIST LEADER GIORGIO BORG OLIVIER SPENT THE MAJORITY OF THE TIME APPEALING FOR CALM AND ORDER AMONG NATIONALIST SUPPORTERS DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. HE SAID THAT DESPITE THE MANY THREATS AND PROVOCATIONS FROM THE "SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT" AND LABOR PARTY THUGS, SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONALIST PARTY WAS GROWING AND THIS WOULD CARRY THEM THROUGH TO VICTORY ON ELECTION DAY. BORG OLIVIER DEPLORED THE FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF HAD NOT TAKEN ACTION TO STOP THE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE NATIONALISTS, WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN GOING ON THROUGHOUT THE FIVE YEARS OF MINTOFF'S ADMINISTRATION. HE CLAIMED THAT THE OBVIOUS BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER UNDER THE LABORITES WAS CAUSING LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG PERSONS AND UNCOMMITTED VOTERS TO SEE THE NATIONALIST PARTY AS THE ONLY HOPE FOR MALTA'S FUTURE AS A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY. (COMMENT: OBSERVERS NOTED THAT THERE WERE, INDEED, A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF YOUTHS OF VOTING AGE IN THE CROWD, WHICH, FOR A NATIONALIST MEETING, WAS A GOOD-SIZED ONE. END COMMENT)

3. AT KALKARA, PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF DELIVERED ONE OF HIS FAMILIAR EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECHES WHICH RANGED OVER EVERY POSSIBLE SUBJECT, FROM ANCIENT MALTESE HISTORY TO THE BANKING NEEDS OF THE "NEW SOCIALIST GENERATION". MOST OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS CONSISTED OF A RECITAL OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS GOVERNMENT DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS. HOWEVER HE DID EMPHASIZE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE LABOR PARTY'S PROGRAM FOR MALTA'S FUTURE DEFENSE AND SECURITY NEEDS. WITHIN THIS CONTEXT, HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO MAKE A WHIPPING BOY OF "THE AMERICANS" FOR PURPORTED MISTREATMENT OF THE MALTESE SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR TWO.

4. MINTOFF SAID THAT, AFTER THE WAR, THE AMERICANS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GAVE AID TO EVERYONE IN EUROPE TO AVOID COMMUNISM, BUT THAT THE MALTESE WERE NOT CONSIDERED PART OF EUROPE AND THEREFORE RECEIVED NO AMERICAN AID. HE SAID THAT THE AMERICANS GAVE THE GERMANS, THE ITALIANS, THE FRENCH AND THE GREEKS MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF POUNDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND FOR THE BUILDING OF INDUSTRY TO ENABLE THEIR COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP.

5. MINTOFF STATED THAT GERMANY HAD MADE GREAT PROGRESS BECAUSE THE AMERICANS HAD HELPED THAT COUNTRY, EVEN THOUGH THE GERMANS HAD KILLED MANY OF THE AMERICANS. BUT THE MALTESE DID NOT KILL THE AMERICANS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE MALTESE DID NOTHING BUT HELP IN THE WAR. THE AMERICANS, HOWEVER, HAD NOT GIVEN AID TO MALTA BECAUSE "WE WERE NOT IN EUROPE, AND THEY DID NOT REGARD US AS EUROPEANS".

6. THE AMERICANS HAD GIVEN MALTA A SCROLL, MINTOFF SAID (COMMENT: THE SCROLL AWARDED THE ISLAND ON DECEMBER 7, 1943, BY PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT FOR THE "VALOROUS SERVICE FAR ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY" IN RESISTING GERMAN AND ITALIAN AIR AND SEA ATTACKS. END COMMENT), BUT THEN TOLD THE MALTESE THEY WERE "AFRICANS, NOT EUROPEANS", AND THEREFORE DID NOT QUALIFY FOR MARSHALL PLAN AID.

7. MINTOFF WENT ON TO SAY THAT MALTA'S NEIGHBORS, SUCH AS "ITALY, LIBYA, TUNISIA AND ALGERIA" DID NOT WANT TO SEE MALTA REMAIN AS A FORTRESS, OR TO BECOME PART OF NATO. MALTA'S FUTURE WAS DEPENDENT UPON LIVING WITH THE ISLAND'S CLOSE NEIGHBORS ON A "BROTHERLY BASIS", SO THAT BY 1979 MALTA WOULD BE FREE OF THE "PLAGUE FROM WHICH IT HAD SUFFERED FOR SO MANY YEARS" (I.E., THE PRESENCE OF "FOREIGN" MILITARY FORCES). MINTOFF CLOSED BY STATING THAT THE "MORAL AND MATERIAL ADVANTAGES OF SOCIALISM" WOULD BE THE ANSWER TO MALTA'S FUTURE, ALONG WITH HELP FROM ITS SYMPATHETIC NEIGHBORS.

8. COMMENT: MINTOFF'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS SPEECHES TO LARGE LABOR PARTY MEETINGS OFTEN PRODUCE FANCIFUL RE-INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORY SUCH AS THIS ONE. HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALSO IS VERY FOND OF CASTIGATING "FOREIGN DEVILS", BUT USUALLY THEY HAVE A BRITISH ACCENT RATHER THAN AN AMERICAN ONE. THIS APPEARS TO BE THE FIRST (BUT MAY WELL NOT BE THE LAST) OCCASION ON WHICH MINTOFF HAS NOMINATED UNCLE SAM AS THE CAUSE OF MALTA'S PROBLEMS. MINTOFF'S SPEECH RECEIVED ONLY LIMITED COVERAGE IN THE PRESS AND ON TELEVISION, AND IT WAS GENERALLY TREATED AS JUST ANOTHER OF HIS RAMBLING PUBLIC PERFORMANCES. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY OF THESE IN THE PAST, AND THERE WILL BE MANY MORE AS THE CAMPAIGN RUNS ITS COURSE. ALL IN ALL, THE FIRST WEEK OF THE OFFICIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN WAS RATHER AN ANTI-CLIMAX AFTER THE FIREWORKS AND FISTICUFFS OF THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND. BOTH PARTIES HAVE NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR THIS WEEK, BUT THE SPEAKERS AND CANDIDATES ARE ALREADY SHOWING

SIGNS OF NEEDING NEW IDEAS TO PRESENT TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS
IF THEY ARE TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH MORE THAN REPETITIVE
PREACHING TO THE LONG-SINCE CONVERTED. END COMMENT.
WIGGINS

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